

Vanya

VANYA Excuse me. What are you doing? It's very rude.

SPIKE I'm still listening. I can multitask. I can drive and text, or watch a movie and tweet.

VANYA You can multitask, how wonderful. You can tweet. You twitter and tweet, you email and text, your life is abuzz with electrical communication. (brief breath) I know older people always think the past was better, but really—instead of a text with all these lower case letters, and no punctuation, what about a nicely crafted letter, sent through the post office? Or a thank-you note.

SPIKE Yeah, yeah, it was real elegant back then, I get it. You had to wait 5 days for a letter, but it was real nice. Time marches on, dude.

Vanya is fed up with Spike, but he's also upset about the weather, about losing the house, about his life, and about so many awful changes in the world and country. He explodes, his thoughts are almost ahead of him.

Start

VANYA WE USED TO LICK POSTAGE STAMPS BACK THEN. Obviously you've never heard of that. They didn't just peel off ready-made with sticky stuff on the back—the sticky stuff had to be triggered by your wet tongue. It took time. If you were sending out many letters, you could be licking postage stamps for 10 minutes or so.

We used typewriters back then. And Wite-Out for corrections. And carbon paper for copies.

We had telephones and we had to dial the number by putting our index finger in a round hole representing 2 to zero. If the number was 909-9999, it could take *hours* just to dial the number. We had to have PATIENCE then. And we used to lick postage stamps. It was unpleasant, but it had to be done.

We didn't multitask. Doing one thing at a time seemed appropriate. But I guess you can sort of listen to a play and sort of send a message and sort of play a video game . . . all at once. It must be wonderful . . .

Spike is starting to get uncomfortable with Vanya's upset, and he gets up from the couch to walk away, but Vanya steps in front of him.

I know I sound like a crank, but I don't like change. My play is about scary change in the weather. But there are other changes too that have happened.

Vanya is starting to address everyone in the room, not always specifically, but sometimes. Sonia and Masha are interested by what he's saying, but also a bit concerned that he is having an outburst. Cassandra and Nina both like Vanya and pay attention, but worry a bit for him too.

There are 785 television channels. You can watch the news report that matches what you already think. In the 50s there were only 3 or 4 channels, and it was all in black-and-white.

And there were no child stars who became drug addicts like Lindsay Lohan. I mean, Hayley Mills was in the original *Parent Trap*, and she grew up to be a sensible, nice woman.

There was no *South Park*. We saw *Howdy Doody* starring a puppet. Then there was *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*—starring two more puppets, and a sweet lady named Fran. We watched puppets back then!

Sonia crosses to Vanya sympathetically and tries to get him to sit down. He is on a roll, and barely senses her; and gently encourages her to sit down instead. He doesn't stop talking, he keeps going.

There was the *Perry Como Show*. He was soothing. *The Dinah Shore Show*. She was charming.

The Bishop Sheen Show was on Sunday evening. A Catholic bishop had his own TV show. And he gave SERMONS. On TV. We weren't Catholic, but we watched him anyway. He said sensible things. On television.

The Ed Sullivan Show was on before *Bishop Sheen*, and he had opera singers on, And performers from current Broadway shows. Richard Burton and Julie Andrews would sing songs from *Camelot*. It was wonderful. It helped theater be part of the national consciousness, which it isn't anymore.

And he had Señor Wences on, who had a Spanish accent and was a ventriloquist. And he painted a mouth on his fist, and he would make it speak.

He speaks in funny voice—high one, very low one, high one—and uses his hand and thumb to imitate the way Señor Wences used his hand as a speaking puppet.

(*high*) “Hello,” (*low*) “Hello,” (*high*) “Hello.” (*low*) Hello. His act lasted about . . . seven hours. As a child I thought to myself, this must be what eternity feels like. And yet that’s a good concept for a child to have.

SPIKE I thought you were talking about things you liked in the past.

VANYA You’re right. I’m inconsistent. I don’t know what I’m saying. Be quiet. BE QUIET.

We licked postage stamps, and we sent letters.

I preferred Bishop Sheen to Señor Wences. Bishop Sheen was a good speaker, and he used his real mouth rather than one drawn onto his fist, and this made me take him more seriously.

I remember him talking about the seed falling on the good soil, falling on the bad soil, the seed falling on rock. In other words, build your life on a strong foundation.

Of course, I haven’t done that. But I meant to. Bishop Sheen said I should. I guess I got lost. But it was interesting to hear him talk that way. It was *articulate*. I don’t think much is articulate in the world anymore.

And I’m saying this all in retrospect. I didn’t think it when I was 10. I was just trying to get through life one day at a time when I was 10.

(*to Spike*) And I didn’t have a life ahead of me where I was going to be almost cast in *Entourage 2*. But I guess you’re having a good life, and I had foolish one.

Tell me, do they have any older characters on *Entourage 2*? Do they need someone in their late 50s, who has had a useless life and is looking back feeling bitter? Might I audition for that part? Could you check?

Masha is worried about Vanya. She crosses to him.